

**REMARKS**

Upon entry of the present amendment, claims 1, 5, 8, 9, and 14 will have been amended while claims 16 through 20 will have been submitted for consideration by the Examiner. None of the amendments to the claims will have been made in view of any prior art and accordingly no prosecution history estoppel should attach to these the changes. Rather, the changes to the claims have been made solely in order to improve the language thereof as well as to eliminate informalities noted by the Examiner in the outstanding Official Action. Additionally, the newly submitted claims are presented in order to afford Applicants the scope of coverage to which they are entitled for the invention disclosed in the present application.

In view of the herein contained amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of each of the outstanding objection and rejection set forth in the above-mentioned Official Action, together with an indication of the allowability of all of the claims pending in the present application. Such action is now believed to be appropriate and proper and is thus respectfully requested, in due course.

Initially, Applicants wish to respectfully thank the Examiner for his acknowledgment of their claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119 as well as for confirming that the certified copies of the foreign priority documents, upon which the above noted claim for foreign priority is based, have been received. Since the present application is a national phase application, it is assumed that the certified copies of the Japanese applications were received from the International Bureau.

Applicants additionally wish to respectfully thank the Examiner for confirming his consideration of the documents filed in the Information Disclosure Statement filed in the present

application on July 27, 2006, by the return of an appropriately initialed and signed copy of the PTO-1449 Form attached to the above noted Information Disclosure Statement.

In this regard, Applicants additionally note the concurrent filing of a Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner consider the documents cited in the above noted Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement, which were cited in a European Search Report, and to confirm such consideration by the return, of an appropriately signed and initialed copy of the PTO-1449 Form attached to the above noted Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement.

Applicants additionally note that the Examiner has not indicated any objections to the drawings filed in the present application and thus assume that such drawings have been accepted. Nevertheless, Applicants respectfully request, in the next Official Action, that the Examiner explicitly indicate his acceptance of the drawings filed in the present application.

In the outstanding Official Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-15 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. The Examiner asserted that the claims fail to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. The Examiner noted several terms in claims 1 and 14 which, he asserted, lacked sufficient antecedent basis.

By the present response, and without in any manner acquiescing in the Examiner's assertion that previously pending claims 1 and 14 were indefinite, Applicants have amended these (as well as other) claims to eliminate any terminology that could possibly be considered to be lacking in proper or sufficient antecedent basis. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejection of claims 1-15 is respectfully requested.

Applicants respectfully thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 1 and 14 would be allowable if rewritten or amended to overcome the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Moreover, Applicants note the Examiner's indication regarding claims 2-13 and 15. In this regard, Applicants respectfully submit that in view of the elimination of the rejection applied against the independent claims, all of the remaining dependent claims are also allowable, based both upon their dependence from an admitted to be allowable base claim as well as based upon their own additional recitations.

Additionally, Applicants respectfully request consideration together with an indication of the allowability of newly submitted claims 16-20, which depend from now allowable claim 14. The subject matter of these newly submitted claims is fully supported by the disclosure of the present application and generally corresponds to the features recited in various of the previously pending claims, that depended from apparatus claim 1.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding objection and rejection together with an indication of the allowability of all of claims 1-20 pending in the present application.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present application in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so. Applicants have amended various of the claims to eliminate informalities in claim language noted by the Examiner as well as to improve the language of the claims. Applicants have additionally submitted several dependent claims for consideration by the Examiner. None of the claim amendments has been made in view of the prior art and none of the claim amendments in any significant fashion narrow the scope of the respective claims.

In view of the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter, Applicants respectfully request an explicit indication of the allowability of all the claims in the present application, in due course.

Any amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should the Examiner have any questions or comments regarding this Response, or the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully Submitted,  
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